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United Nations Conferences and Observances

This year, the international community will focus on pressing concerns in a series of global meetings. The Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries will be held in Brussels from 14 to 20 May, followed by the International Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (New York, 9-20 July), and the World Conference against Racism and Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (Durban, South Africa, 31 August-7 September). For its part, the General Assembly will hold special sessions on human settlements (6-8 June), HIV/AIDS (25-27 June), and children (19-21 September).

This year the international community observes the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, the International Year of Mobilization against Racism and Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, and the International Year of Volunteers. In 2000, the General Assembly proclaimed the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism (2001-2010) and the International Year of Freshwater (2003), as well as the International Day for Biological Diversity (22 May), World Refugee Day (20 June), and the International Migrants Day (18 December).

The following pages contain information on United Nations conferences and special observances scheduled for 2001 and ensuing years, as well as on various internationally recognized decades, years, weeks and days.

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PEACE

United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations (2001)

With 2001 proclaimed as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, the General Assembly has invited governments, international organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to continue planning and organizing cultural, educational and social programmes to promote the concept of dialogue among civilizations, including by organizing conferences and seminars and disseminating information and scholarly material (resolution 55/23 of 13 November 2000). The Assembly has decided to devote two days of plenary meetings, on 3 and 4 December 2001, to the commemoration and consideration of the Year, including any follow-up measures. The Assembly proclaimed the Year by resolution 53/22 of 4 November 1998.

International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World (2001-2010)

On 29 November 2000, the General Assembly recognized that the objective of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World, 2001-2010, was to further strengthen the global movement for a culture of peace, and invited States to place greater emphasis on promoting a culture of peace and non-violence (resolution 55/47). The Assembly designated the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as the lead agency for the Decade.

Proclaiming the Decade in 1998 (resolution 53/25 of 10 November), the Assembly invited NGOs, religious bodies and groups, educational institutions, artists and the media to support the Decade for the benefit of every child of the world.

International Day of Peace (September - opening day of General Assembly)

In 1981, the General Assembly declared that the opening day of its regular session in September "shall be officially dedicated and observed as the International Day of Peace and shall be devoted to commemorating and strengthening the ideals of peace both within and among all nations and peoples" (resolution 36/67). In 1998, the Assembly reaffirmed that the Day should continue to be observed on the opening day of its annual regular session (resolution 52/232 of 4 June). In 2001, the opening day will be 11 September.

DISARMAMENT AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (2001)

The United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects will take place in New York from 9 to 20 July 2001. In 2000, the General Assembly (resolution 55/33 Q of 20 November 2000) requested the Secretary-General to provide the Conference with information on the magnitude and scope of illicit trafficking and circulation of small arms and light weapons, measures to combat that phenomenon and the role of the United Nations thereon. The Conference was convened by resolution 54/54 V of 15 December 1999. The Assembly decided that the second session of the Conference's preparatory committee should be held from 8 to 19 January and the third session from 19 to 30 March 2001 in New York.

Second Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban-Treaty (2001)

The second Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban-Treaty (CTBT) will take place in New York from 25 to 27 September 2001. The Treaty prohibits any nuclear weapon-test explosion or any other nuclear explosion anywhere in the world. It was drafted at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva and adopted by the General Assembly on 10 September 1996 (resolution 50/245), and will enter into force when ratified by 44 nuclear-capable States listed in Annex 2 to the Treaty. In 2000, the General Assembly (resolution 55/41 of 20 November) stressed the importance and urgency of signature and ratification to achieve the early entry into force of the Treaty. The first Conference took place in Vienna in 1999.

Special Session of the General Assembly on Disarmament

The General Assembly, on 20 November 2000, decided to convene its fourth special session devoted to disarmament, subject to the emergence of a consensus on its objectives and agenda. It requested the Secretary-General to seek the views of Member States on the session's objectives, agenda and timing (resolution 55/33 M).

In deciding to convene the special session (resolution 50/70 F of 12 December 1995), the Assembly established a preparatory committee to produce a draft agenda and examine all related questions. Previous special sessions on disarmament were held in 1978, 1982 and 1988.

Disarmament Week (24-30 October)

The annual observance of Disarmament Week, which begins on the anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, was called for in the Final Document of the General Assembly 1978 special session on disarmament (resolution S-10/2). States

were invited to highlight the danger of the arms race, propagate the need for its cessation and increase public understanding of the urgent tasks of disarmament.

In 1995, the Assembly invited governments, as well as NGOs, to continue taking an active part in Disarmament Week (resolution 50/72 B of 12 December). It invited the Secretary-General to continue using the United Nations information entities as widely as possible to promote a better understanding among the public of disarmament problems and the aims of the Week.

OUTER SPACE

World Space Week
(4-10 October)

By resolution 54/68 of 6 December 1999, the General Assembly has proclaimed World Space Week, to be observed between 4 and 10 October, to celebrate the contributions of space science and technology to the betterment of the human condition. The dates recall the launch, on 4 October 1957, of the first artificial satellite, Sputnik I, and the entry into force, on 10 October 1967, of the Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space.

PALESTINE QUESTION

International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People
(29 November)

In 1977, the General Assembly called for the annual observance of 29 November as the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People (resolution 32/40 B). On that day, in 1947, the Assembly had adopted the resolution on the partition of Palestine (resolution 181 (II)).

On 1 December 2000, the Assembly noted the action taken by Member States to observe the Day, and requested them to continue to give it the widest possible publicity (resolution 55/53).

Reaffirming that the United Nations had a permanent responsibility with respect to the question of Palestine until it was resolved in a satisfactory manner in accordance with international legitimacy, the Assembly, on 1 December 2000, authorized the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to continue to promote the exercise of these rights, to adjust its work programme in the light of developments, and to emphasize the need to mobilize support and assistance for the Palestinian people (resolution 55/52). The Committee was requested to continue to cooperate with Palestinian and other NGOs in mobilizing international support for the achievement by the Palestinian people of its rights, and for a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine.

DECOLONIZATION

Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism (2001-2010)

On 8 December 2000, as the General Assembly observed the fortieth anniversary of its adoption of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, it declared 2001-2010 the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism (resolution 55/146). The Assembly called upon the administering Powers to take steps to enable the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories to exercise their right to self-determination, including independence, and to cooperate with the Special Committee on decolonization to finalize before the end of 2001 a programme of work to facilitate the implementation of the relevant resolutions on decolonization.

The First Decade, 1990-2000, had been declared in 1988 (resolution 43/47).

Week of Solidarity with the Peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories (beginning 25 May)

The General Assembly in 1999 requested the Special Committee on decolonization to observe annually the Week of Solidarity with the Peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories commencing on the week beginning 25 May 1999 (resolution 54/91 of 6 December). The Week had been proclaimed in 1972 (resolution 2911 (XXVII)) as the Week of Solidarity with the Colonial Peoples of Southern Africa and Guinea (Bissau) and Cape Verde Fighting For Freedom, Independence and Equal Rights, to begin on 25 May, Africa Liberation Day.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (2001)

The Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries will be held from 14 to 20 May 2001, hosted by the European Union in Brussels. The Intergovernmental Preparatory Committee is to hold its second session from 5 to 9 February 2001 and its final session from 2 to 6 April 2001 in New York, as decided by the General Assembly (resolution 55/214 of 20 December 2000).

The Conference will assess the results of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s (resolution 45/206 of 21 December 1990), review implementation of international support measures, and formulate and adopt policies and measures for the sustainable development of the least developed countries and their integration into the world economy.

High-level Intergovernmental Event on Financing for Development (2002)

On 20 December 2000, the General Assembly decided that the High-level International Intergovernmental Event on Financing for Development should be scheduled for the first quarter of 2002, at a date to be agreed upon (resolution 55/213). The event is "to address national, international and systemic issues in a holistic manner in the context of globalization and interdependence" and, by so doing, address development through the perspective of finance (resolution 54/196 of 22 December 1999).

The Assembly decided that the Preparatory Committee should hold the second substantive session from 12 to 23 February 2001, the third from 30 April to 11 May 2001 and a final substantive session from 14 to 25 February 2002, all in New York.

Eighth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (2002)

The Eighth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names will take place in Berlin in August/September 2002. Consistent use of accurate place names is essential for effective communication worldwide, and facilitates economic and social development, conservation and national infrastructure. The secretariat for the Conference is the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

International Year of Microcredit (2005)

In 1998, proclaiming 2005 as the International Year of Microcredit (resolution 53/197 of 15 December), the General Assembly requested that the Year's observance be a special occasion for giving impetus to microcredit programmes throughout the world. The Assembly asked all those involved in poverty eradication to take additional steps to make available credit and related services for self-employment and income-generating activities to an increasing number of people living in poverty. Governments, NGOs, the private sector and the media were invited to highlight the role of microcredit in poverty eradication, its contribution to social development, and its positive impact on the lives of the poor.

United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006)

On 20 December 2000, the General Assembly stressed that the United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty, 1997-2006, should contribute to achieving the targets of halving, by 2015, the proportion of people living on less than one dollar a day and that of people suffering from hunger, through decisive national action and strengthened international cooperation (resolution 55/210).

The Assembly proclaimed the Decade in 1995 (resolution 50/107 II of 20 December) to follow up on the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty, 1996. The Decade's main objective is eradicating absolute poverty and

reducing overall poverty substantially in the world. The theme for the Decade is "Eradicating poverty is an ethical, social, political and economic imperative of humankind" (resolution 51/178 of 16 December 1996).

Second Industrial Development Decade for Africa (1993-2002)

In 1999, the General Assembly invited the international community, the African Development Bank and other regional institutions to support the implementation of the programme for the Second Industrial Development Decade for Africa, 1993-2002 (resolution 54/203 of 22 December). It called on the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) to strengthen its working relationships with the World Trade Organization (WTO) and other multilateral institutions for the provision of technical assistance to African countries, so as to enhance their capacity to overcome technical barriers to trade in industrial and other products.

The Assembly proclaimed the Decade in 1989 on the recommendation of UNIDO (resolution 44/237), and adopted the programme for the Decade in 1992 (resolution 47/177).

International Day of Cooperatives (first Saturday of July)

In 1992, the General Assembly proclaimed the first Saturday of July 1995 to be International Day of Cooperatives (resolution 47/90 of 16 December). The date marked the centenary of the International Cooperative Alliance, an umbrella group of organizations comprising 760 million members of cooperatives in 100 countries.

In 1994, recognizing that cooperatives were becoming an indispensable factor of economic and social development, the Assembly invited governments, international organizations, specialized agencies and national and international cooperative organizations to observe the Day every year (resolution 49/155 of 23 December).

International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (17 October)

In 1992, the General Assembly, welcoming the fact that certain NGOs, on the initiative of one of them (the French-based International Movement ATD Fourth World), had, in many States, observed 17 October as World Day for Overcoming Extreme Poverty, declared that date the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (resolution 47/196 of 22 December). The observance of the Day aims to promote awareness of the need to eradicate poverty and destitution in all countries, particularly in developing countries -- a need that has become a development priority.

World Development Information Day (24 October)

The General Assembly in 1972 instituted World Development Information Day to draw the attention of world public opinion to development problems and the need to strengthen international cooperation to solve them (resolution 3038(XXVII)). The Assembly decided that the date for the Day should coincide in principle with United Nations Day, 24 October, which was also the date of the adoption, in 1970, of the International Development Strategy for the Second United Nations Development Decade. The Assembly felt that improving the dissemination of information and the mobilization of public opinion, particularly among young people, would lead to greater awareness of the problems of development, thus, promoting efforts in the sphere of international cooperation for development.

Africa Industrialization Day (20 November)

Within the framework of the Second Industrial Development Decade for Africa, the General Assembly proclaimed 20 November as Africa Industrialization Day (resolution 44/237 of 22 December 1989). The Day is intended to mobilize the commitment of the international community to the industrialization of Africa.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

International Year of Volunteers (2001)

Addressing the International Year of Volunteers, 2001, the General Assembly has called on States to promote discussion of the characteristics and trends of volunteer action in their own societies, including the major challenges which the Year can help to address (resolution 55/57 of 4 December 2000). It has decided to devote two plenary meetings of its fifty-sixth session to volunteering, to coincide with the close of the International Year on 5 December 2001.

The Assembly proclaimed the International Year in 1997 (resolution 52/17 of 20 November). The focal point for the Year is the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme (see www.iyv2001.org).

International Year of Mountains (2002)

The General Assembly has encouraged States, the United Nations system and all other actors to take advantage of the International Year of Mountains to ensure the well-being of mountain communities by promoting conservation and sustainable development in mountain areas; increase awareness of mountain ecosystems and their importance in providing crucial goods and services, such as water supply and food security; and promote and defend the cultural heritage of mountain communities (resolution 55/189 of 20 December 2000). The Assembly proclaimed the Year by resolution 53/24 of 10 November 1998. The lead agency for the Year is the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations.

International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development (5 December)

The General Assembly has invited governments to observe annually, on 5 December, the International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development, also urging them to heighten awareness of the contribution of volunteer service, thereby stimulating more people in all walks of life to offer their services as volunteers, both at home and abroad (resolution 40/212 of 17 December 1985).

ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002)

On 20 December 2000 (resolution 55/199), the General Assembly decided to hold a 10-year review of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 2002 in South Africa. The event, to be held at the summit level, will review progress in implementing the outcome of the Conference; focus on the identification of areas where further efforts and action-oriented decisions are needed; address new challenges and opportunities; and result in renewed political commitment and support for sustainable development. The Assembly decided to call the review the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

The Commission on Sustainable Development, acting as the preparatory committee, will hold one session from 30 April to 2 May 2001 in New York, and three sessions in January, March and May 2002.

The 1992 Conference (the Earth Summit) was held in Rio de Janeiro.

International Year of Ecotourism (2002)

As recommended by the Economic and Social Council (resolution 1998/40 of 30 July 1998), the General Assembly proclaimed 2002 the International Year of Ecotourism (resolution 53/200 of 15 December 1998). The Assembly stated that the Year would encourage cooperation among governments, international and regional organizations and NGOs to achieve the aims of Agenda 21 in promoting development and the protection of the environment. It stressed the need to integrate sustainable development in the tourist industry, and invited States, intergovernmental and governmental organizations to exert all possible efforts on behalf of the success of the Year, in particular regarding ecotourism in developing countries.

International Year of Freshwater
(2003)

Proclaiming 2003 the International Year of Freshwater (resolution 55/196 of 20 December 2000), the General Assembly has invited States, the United Nations system and all other actors to take advantage of the Year to increase awareness of the importance of freshwater and to promote action at all levels. The Assembly invited the Subcommittee on Freshwater Resources of the Administrative Committee on Coordination to serve as the coordinating entity of the Year, and to develop proposals to possible activities that could take place in preparation for and during the Year.

World Day for Water
(22 March)

The General Assembly has declared 22 March as World Day for Water (resolution 47/193 of 22 December 1992). The observance aims at promoting awareness of the extent to which water resource development contributes to economic productivity and social well-being.

International Day for Biological Diversity
(22 May)

On 20 December 2000, the General Assembly proclaimed 22 May, the date of adoption of the Convention on Biological Diversity, as the International Day for Biological Diversity (resolution 55/201). The Day was previously observed on 29 December (resolution 49/119 of 19 December 1994). In 2000, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, at its fifth meeting, had recommended that the date be changed to give it greater visibility.

World Environment Day
(5 June)

By resolution 2994 (XXVII)) of 15 December 1972, the General Assembly designated 5 June as World Environment Day to deepen public awareness of the need to preserve and enhance the environment. That date recalls the opening day of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm, 1972), which led to the establishment of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought
(17 June)

World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought, 17 June, was proclaimed by the General Assembly in 1994 (resolution 49/115). On that date, the same year, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification was adopted. States were invited to devote the World Day to promoting awareness of the need for international cooperation to combat desertification and the effects of drought, and on the implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification.

International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer (16 September)

In 1994, the General Assembly proclaimed 16 September the International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer, commemorating the date of the signing, in 1987, of the Montreal Protocol on Substances That Deplete the Ozone Layer (resolution 49/114 of 19 December). States were invited to devote the Day to promote activities in accordance with the objectives of the Protocol and its amendments. The ozone layer, a fragile shield of gas, protects the Earth from the harmful portion of the rays of the sun, thus, helping preserve life on the planet.

HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

Special Session of the General Assembly on the Implementation of the Outcome of the Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (2001)

The General Assembly has decided to hold from 6 to 8 June 2001 its special session to review and appraise the implementation of the outcome of the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) (resolution 55/195 of 20 December 2000). At the Conference (Istanbul, 1996), world leaders agreed on the Habitat Agenda -- a set of commitments for adequate shelter for all, better standards of living for their people, sustainable human development and the mobilization of financial resources.

The Assembly has decided that the provisional agenda shall include a review and appraisal of progress made in implementing the Habitat Agenda; actions and initiatives for overcoming obstacles to implementing the Agenda; and a declaration on cities and human settlements in the new millennium. The Commission on Human Settlements, acting as the preparatory committee, will hold its second substantive session from 19 to 23 February in Nairobi.

World Habitat Day (first Monday of October)

In 1985, acting on a recommendation of the Commission on Human Settlements, the General Assembly designated the first Monday of October as World Habitat Day (resolution 40/202 A). The first observance of the Day, in 1986, marked the tenth anniversary of the first international conference on the issue -- Habitat: United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Vancouver, Canada, 1976).

NATURAL DISASTERS

International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction (second Wednesday of October)

In 1999, the General Assembly decided to maintain the observance of the International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction on the second Wednesday of October (resolution 54/219 of 22 December). The Assembly had designated that day (resolution 44/236) to be observed during the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, 1990-1999.

HUMAN RIGHTS

United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004)

On 4 December 2000, the General Assembly urged governments to contribute further to implementing the Plan of Action for the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education, by encouraging, supporting and involving NGOs and community-based organizations in implementing national plans of action (resolution 55/94).

The General Assembly proclaimed the Decade in 1994, to begin on 1 January 1995, and welcomed the Plan of Action for the Decade submitted by the Secretary-General (resolution 49/184). The Assembly stated that human rights education should be a lifelong process by which people learn respect for the dignity of others. Governments were called upon to direct education towards the full development of the human personality and the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Coordinator for the implementation of the Plan of Action is the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

World Refugee Day (20 June)

On 4 December 2000, the General Assembly noted that 2001 marked the fiftieth anniversary of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, and that the Organization of African Unity (OAU) had agreed to have International Refugee Day coincide with Africa Refugee Day on 20 June. It, therefore, decided that, as from 2001, 20 June would be celebrated as World Refugee Day (resolution 55/76).

International Day in Support of Victims of Torture (26 June)

The Assembly in 1997, on the recommendation of the Economic and Social Council (decision 1997/251), proclaimed 26 June United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture (resolution 52/149 of 12 December). The Day aims at the eradication of torture and the effective functioning of the 1984 Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, which entered into force on 26 June 1987.

International Day for Tolerance
(16 November)

In 1996, the General Assembly invited Member States to observe the International Day for Tolerance on 16 November, with activities directed towards both educational establishments and the wider public (resolution 51/95 of 12 December). This action came in the wake of the United Nations Year for Tolerance, 1995, proclaimed by the Assembly in 1993 (resolution 48/126). The Year had been declared on the initiative of the General Conference of UNESCO; on 16 November 1995, the UNESCO member States had adopted the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance and Follow-up Plan of Action for the Year.

International Day for the Abolition of Slavery
(2 December)

International Day for the Abolition of Slavery, 2 December, recalls the date of the adoption, by the General Assembly, of the United Nations Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and the Exploitation of Others (resolution 317 (IV) of 2 December 1949).

Human Rights Day
(10 December)

All States and interested organizations were invited by the General Assembly in 1950 to observe 10 December as Human Rights Day (resolution 423(V)). The Day marks the anniversary of the Assembly's adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948.

International Migrants Day
(18 December)

As recommended by the Economic and Social Council (decision 2000/288 of 28 July 2000), the General Assembly has proclaimed 18 December International Migrants Day (resolution 55/93 of 4 December 2000). On that day, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families was adopted in 1990 (resolution 45/158). The Assembly has stressed the need to make further efforts to ensure respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all migrants. It is estimated that some 130 million people live outside their countries of origin.

RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

World Conference against Racism and Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance
(2001)

The World Conference against Racism and Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance is to be held from 31 August to 7 September 2001 in Durban, South Africa. In 2000 (resolution 55/84 of 4 December), the Assembly

welcomed the slogan adopted by the Conference's Preparatory Committee, "United to combat racism: equality, justice, dignity".

In deciding to convene the Conference, the General Assembly in 1997 listed as its objectives: to review progress made in the fight against racism and racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance; to consider ways and means to ensure the application of standards and the implementation of instruments to combat those phenomena; to increase the level of awareness; and to formulate recommendations for action-oriented measures to combat those phenomena (resolution 52/111 of 12 December).

The Secretary-General of the Conference is the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. The Commission on Human Rights, acting as the preparatory committee, is to hold its second session from 21 May to 1 June 2001 in Geneva.

Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination (1993-2003)

In 1993, the General Assembly proclaimed the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination, beginning in 1993, and adopted its Programme of Action (resolution 48/91 of 20 December). The Assembly urged governments to combat new forms of racism -- such as xenophobia and related intolerance; discrimination based on culture, nationality, religion or language; and racism resulting from official doctrines of racial superiority or exclusivity, such as ethnic cleansing.

The First Decade for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination was proclaimed in 1973, and the Second Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination in 1983.

International Year of Mobilization against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (2001)

On 4 December 2000, the General Assembly called for observing the International Year of Mobil ation against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Into' rance at all levels and by all actors, including through programmes of action (resolution 55/84 III). The Year, proclaimed by the Assembly in 1998 (resolution 53/132 III of 9 December), aims at drawing world attention to the objectives of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance and at giving momentum to the political commitment to eliminate those phenomena.

International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (21 March)

The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination is observed annually on 21 March. On that day, in 1960, police opened fire and killed 69 people at a peaceful demonstration in Sharpeville, South Africa, against the apartheid "pass laws". Proclaiming the Day in 1966, the General Assembly called on the international community to redouble its efforts to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination (resolution 2142(XXI)).

Week of Solidarity with the Peoples Struggling against Racism and Racial Discrimination (beginning on 21 March)

As part of its programme for the first Decade for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination, the General Assembly in 1979 called for the observance by all States of a Week of Solidarity with the Peoples Struggling against Racism and Racial Discrimination, beginning on 21 March (resolution 34/24).

WOMEN

United Nations Day for Women's Rights and International Peace (8 March)

In 1977 (resolution 32/142), the General Assembly invited States to proclaim, in accordance with their historical and national traditions and customs, any day of the year as United Nations Day for Women's Rights and International Peace. States were called upon to contribute to creating conditions for the elimination of discrimination against women and for their full and equal participation in social development. That action came on the wake of the International Women's Year (1975) and the United Nations Decade for Women (1976-1985), both proclaimed by the Assembly.

The United Nations began observing International Women's Day, 8 March, in 1975 -- the International Women's Year.

International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women (25 November)

The General Assembly has designated 25 November International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and has invited governments, international organizations and NGOs to organize on that day activities designated to raise public awareness on the problem (resolution 54/134 of 17 December 1999). Women's activists have marked 25 November as a day against violence since 1981. The date came from the brutal 1961 assassination of the three Mirabal sisters, political activists in the Dominican Republic, on orders of Dominican ruler Rafael Trujillo.

CHILDREN

Special Session of the General Assembly on Children (2001)

The General Assembly has decided to convene its special session for follow-up to the 1990 World Summit for Children from 19 to 21 September 2001, and to refer to it as the "special session on children" (resolution 55/26 of 20 November 2000). The special session, while reviewing achievements in implementing the 1990 World Declaration and Plan of Action, will make a renewed commitment and consider future action for children in the forthcoming decade.

The Assembly decided to hold the second substantive session of the Preparatory Committee from 29 January to 2 February 2001 and the third substantive session from 11 to 15 June 2001 in New York.

The World Summit for Children (New York, 30 September 1990) adopted the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children, as well as the Plan of Action for implementing the Declaration.

International Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression (4 June)

On 19 August 1982, at its emergency special session on the question of Palestine, the General Assembly, "appalled at the great number of innocent Palestinian and Lebanese children victims of Israel's acts of aggression", decided to commemorate 4 June of each year as the International Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression (resolution ES-7/8).

Universal Children's Day (20 November)

The General Assembly recommended in 1954 (resolution 836(IX)) that all countries institute a Universal Children's Day, to be observed as a day of worldwide fraternity and understanding between children and of activity promoting the welfare of the world's children. It suggested to governments that the Day be observed on the date which each considers appropriate. The date of 20 November marks the day in which the Assembly adopted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, in 1959, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in 1989.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

International Decade of the World's Indigenous People (1994-2004)

In 1990, the General Assembly proclaimed 1993 the International Year of the World's Indigenous People (resolution 45/164). In 1993, on the recommendation of the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights, the Assembly proclaimed the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People, starting on 10 December 1994 (resolution 48/163), adopting the Programme of Activities for the Decade in 1995 (resolution 50/157). The goal of the Decade is to strengthen international cooperation for solving problems faced by indigenous people in such areas as human rights, the environment, development, education and health. The Coordinator of the Decade is the High Commissioner for Human Rights; its theme is "Indigenous people: Partnership in action".

On 4 December 2000, the Assembly encouraged governments to support the Decade by preparing programmes, establishing national committees and contributing to the Trust Fund for the Decade (resolution 55/80).

International Day of the World's Indigenous People (9 August)

In 1994, the General Assembly decided that the International Day of the World's Indigenous People shall be observed on 9 August every year during the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People (resolution 49/214 of 23 December). The date marks the day of the first meeting, in 1992, of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations of the Subcommission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights.

DISABLED PERSONS

International Day of Disabled Persons (3 December)

In 1992, at the conclusion of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons (1983-1992), the General Assembly proclaimed 3 December as the International Day of Disabled Persons (resolution 47/3). The Decade had been a period of raising awareness and enacting measures to improve the situation of persons with disabilities and to provide them with equal opportunities. Subsequently, the Assembly appealed to Member States to highlight the observance of the Day in order to further integrate people with disabilities into society (resolution 47/88).

Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons (1993-2002)

The Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons (1993-2002) is intended to give impetus to the implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons in the region of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). It is also intended to strengthen regional cooperation in achieving the goals of the World Programme.

The Decade was proclaimed on 23 April 1992 by ESCAP resolution 48/3, and endorsed by the General Assembly on 16 December 1992 (resolution 47/88).

YOUTH

World Youth Forum of the United Nations System (2001)

The fourth session of the World Youth Forum of the United Nations System will be held in Dakar, Senegal, from 5 to 12 August 2001, as decided by the General Assembly in 1999 (resolution 54/120 I of 17 December). The previous session was held in Braga, Portugal, in 1998. The Forum is to assess progress made in implementing the 1998 Braga Youth Action Plan, and to prepare recommendations, strategies and tools to empower young people to participate in decision-making and in evaluation of policies and programmes on key youth issues.

International Youth Day
(12 August)

The General Assembly on 17 December 1999 (resolution 54/120 I) endorsed the recommendation made by the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth (Lisbon, 8-12 August 1998) that 12 August be declared International Youth Day. It recommended that public information activities be organized to support the Day as a way to promote better awareness of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, adopted by the Assembly in 1995 (resolution 50/81).

OLDER PERSONS

Second World Assembly on Ageing
(2002)

On 4 December 2000 (resolution 55/58), on the recommendation of the Economic and Social Council (resolution 2000/1 of 3 May 2000), the General Assembly decided to convene the Second World Assembly on Ageing in Madrid, Spain, from 8 to 12 April 2002. The meeting, convened on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Vienna World Assembly on Ageing, will review the outcome of the first World Assembly, and adopt a revised plan of action and a long-term strategy on ageing. The Commission for Social Development, acting as the preparatory committee, is to meet from 26 February to 2 March in New York.

The first World Assembly on Ageing (Vienna, 1982) adopted the Vienna International Plan of Action on Ageing, endorsed later that year by the General Assembly (resolution 47/86).

International Day of Older Persons
(1 October)

The General Assembly designated 1 October the International Day of Older Persons by resolution 45/106 of 14 December 1990, following up on United Nations initiatives such as the Vienna International Plan of Action on Ageing, adopted by the 1982 World Assembly on Ageing and endorsed later that year by the General Assembly (resolution 47/86).

AIDS

Special Session of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS
(2001)

The special session on HIV/AIDS will be held from 25 to 27 June 2001. On 3 November 2000 (resolution 55/13), the General Assembly decided to convene such special session to address the problem of human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) and secure a global commitment to combat the epidemic.

Issues to be discussed include HIV/AIDS in Africa, international funding and cooperation, the social and economic impact of the epidemic, human rights and AIDS, gender-specific impacts of AIDS, prevention, access to care and treatment, protection and care of AIDS-affected children, scientific research and vaccine development, expanded public/private sector partnerships and the strengthening of national capacities. The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) is the secretariat of the session.

World AIDS Day
(1 December)

The General Assembly in 1988 stated its deep concern about the pandemic proportions of the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). Noting that the World Health Organization (WHO) had declared 1 December 1988 World AIDS Day, the Assembly stressed the importance of observing that occasion (resolution 43/15). Today, over 41 million people are living with HIV/AIDS.

DRUG ABUSE CONTROL

International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking
(26 June)

The General Assembly in 1987 decided to observe 26 June as the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking as an expression of its determination to strengthen action and cooperation to achieve the goal of an international society free of drug abuse. It took that action on 7 December 1987 (resolution 42/112), following a recommendation of the 1987 International Conference on Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, which, on 26 June, had adopted the Comprehensive Multidisciplinary Outline of Future Activities in Drug Abuse Control.

OTHER OBSERVANCES

World Press Freedom Day
(3 May)

The General Assembly in 1993 declared 3 May as World Press Freedom Day (decision 48/432 of 20 December). This action stemmed from the UNESCO General Conference, which, by a 1991 resolution on "Promotion of press freedom in the world", had recognized that a free, pluralistic and independent press was an essential component of any democratic society. The General Conference had transmitted to the General Assembly the wish of UNESCO member States to have 3 May declared "International Press Freedom Day".

That date commemorates the Windhoek Declaration on Promoting an Independent and Pluralistic African Press, adopted on 3 May 1991 by the Seminar on Promoting an Independent and Pluralistic African Press, organized by UNESCO and the United Nations in Windhoek, Namibia.

International Day of Families
(15 May)

In 1993, the General Assembly decided that 15 May of every year should be observed as the International Day of Families (resolution 47/237 of 20 September). In 1989, by resolution 44/82, the Assembly had proclaimed 1994 the International Year of the Family, to increase awareness of family issues and improve the capability of nations to tackle family-related problems with comprehensive policies.

World Population Day
(11 July)

In 1989, the Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) recommended that 11 July be observed as World Population Day. An outgrowth of the Day of Five Billion, celebrated on 11 July 1987, the Day seeks to focus attention on the urgency and importance of population issues, particularly in the context of overall development plans and programmes, and the need to find solutions for these issues. In 2000, world population stood at 6.06 billion, and was growing by 78 million a year. The United Nations estimates there will be between 7.3 billion and 10.7 billion people in 2050, with 8.9 billion the most likely projection.

World Food Day
(16 October)

The aim of World Food Day, proclaimed in 1979 by the Conference of the FAO of the United Nations, is to heighten public awareness of the world food problem and strengthen solidarity in the struggle against hunger, malnutrition and poverty. The Day marks the date of the founding of FAO in 1945. In 1980, the General Assembly endorsed observance of the Day in consideration of the fact that "food is a requisite for human survival and well-being and a fundamental human necessity" (resolution 35/70 of 5 December).

United Nations Day
(24 October)

The anniversary of the entry into force of the United Nations Charter -- 24 October 1945 -- has been celebrated as United Nations Day since 1948. It has traditionally been marked throughout the world by meetings, discussions and exhibits on the achievements and goals of the Organization. In 1971, the General Assembly recommended that Member States observe it as a public holiday (resolution 2782 (XXVI)).

World Television Day
(21 November)

In 1996, the General Assembly proclaimed 21 November as World Television Day, commemorating the date on which, in 1996, the first World Television Forum was held at the United Nations. States were invited to observe the Day by encouraging global exchanges of television programmes focusing on issues such as peace, security, economic and social development, and the enhancement of cultural exchanges (resolution 51/205 of 17 December).

International Civil Aviation Day
(7 December)

In 1996, the General Assembly proclaimed 7 December as International Civil Aviation Day, and urged governments, as well as national, regional, international and intergovernmental organizations, to take appropriate steps to observe it (resolution 51/33 of 6 December). The Day had been declared in 1992 by the Assembly of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), a United Nations specialized agency, to highlight and advance the benefits of international civil aviation. Observation of the Day started on 7 December 1994 -- the fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the Convention on International Civil Aviation, which established ICAO.

Other International Days

Other international days observed throughout the United Nations system include:

World Meteorological Day (23 March); World Health Day (7 April); World Book and Copyright Day (23 April); World Telecommunication Day (17 May); World No-Tobacco Day (31 May); International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and Its Abolition (23 August); International Literacy Day (8 September); World Maritime Day (during the last week in September); World Teachers' Day (5 October); World Post Day (9 October); and World Mental Health Day (10 October).

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